March/April 2010

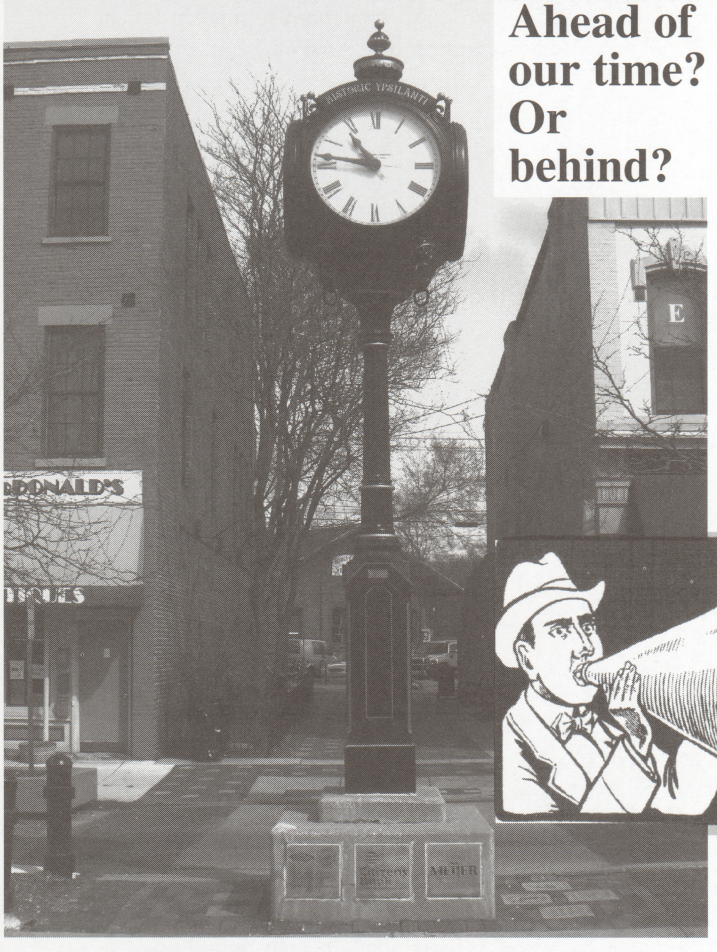
100% FREE *RAG* CONTENT

Depot Town Rag

Another load of OLD STUFF

Volume 23, Number 2

A PUBLICATION OF THE DEPOT TOWN ASSOCIATION, INC. The Old Caboose, 400 Market Place, Ypsilanti, Michigan 48198



Ahead of our time? Or behind?

For a large portion of the year, the clock in the middle of Depot Town is two hours behnd the times..or twenty-two hours ahead, depending on your point of view. And, after all, point of view is everything, isn't it?

Keeping time on the street

Sandee French, past president of the Depot Town Association, notes, "Three years ago the 'Spring Ahead' Daylight Savings Time was changed. In the past, daylight savings began the last Sunday in March. Now it will begin the second Sunday, March 8,....a whopping three weeks earlier than the past.

"Why should you care? Because you will be asked why our clock in the middle of East Cross Street is an hour off and you'll need a good answer.

"When our clock was purchased YEARS ago, the computer was automatically set up to 'Spring Ahead' the last weekend in March.

"Now most clocks will change but our clock tower won't. Be patient...in three weeks our time will be the same in Depot Town as it is everywhere else in Michigan.

"Spring is on the way....YEA!"

It's about time

What's new? Not much

• **Old buildings** Actually, downtown Ypsilanti is older. Ours was the first addition to the original plat—after the main street (Congress Street/Michigan Avenue, Business US-12)).

• **Old cars, trucks, motorcycles, fire engines, bicycles, furniture, etc.** "Old" is still popular down here. And it's so very practical.

• **Old stories and old values** They were so good the first time, we just keep dragging them out again.

Sure, we've got websites, cell phones, and lots of electronic gadgetry to complement these antique amenities, but they work waaaay back in the background. In the foreground, we're local folks serving local folks. It's still a good way to be good neighbors and do good business.

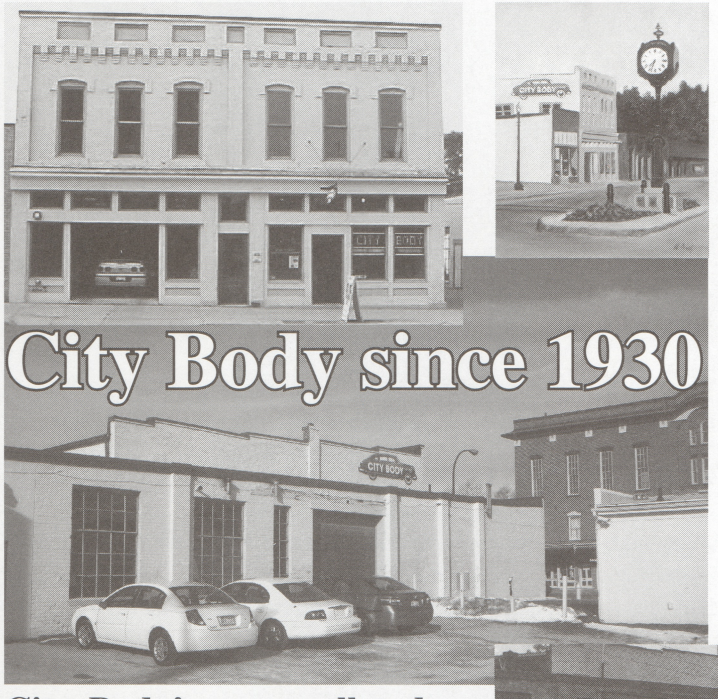
Behind the times?

- 19th century shops with big windows
- Several businesses at least 100 years old
- Friendly neighborhood taverns, restaurants, shops and services
- Freight and passenger trains rumbling through to Detroit and Chicago
- Shopkeepers sweeping their sidewalks and cranking up the awnings

Six years of public input:

Streetscape project goes ahead without DTCDC support

- City DDA Director invites DTA/Elvisfest to join the proposed streetscape project
- Partnership committee formed with agreement to extend the existing clock median
- DDA hires consulting firm, holds series of public hearings for plans to include median extension and safety island
- Fire Department approves the plan. Depot Town DDA formally approves plan with City and MDOT (six years ago)
- DTA/Elvisfest pledges $57,500 for streetscape project with emphasis on pedestrian safety and traffic-calming
- Grant project expanded to include West Cross and EMU. New plan, more meetings; DTCDC reiterates desire for pedestrian safety as a key element of the project
- DTA forms Depot Town Community Development Corporation with oversight of pledged funds
- City reorganizes DDAs into a single unit, new DDA votes with City staff not to include proposals for pedestrian safety in Depot Town. DTCDC withdraws pledge and City goes ahead with streetscape project without pedestrian safety options.



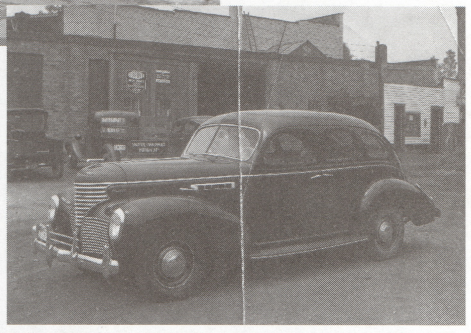
Nelson Amos's painting of the City Body includes the town clock

One of the oldest businesses in the block, City Body carries on its tradition of excellence

Left: Are the last of the 2000 Pontiacs lined up at the east door? Could be. They all look like they were designed in the wind tunnel.

City Body's east wall today and seventy years ago

Note Ring's Beer Depot attached to the side of City Body in the photo at right. At one time this tiny concession sold more take-out beer than all the rest of Ypsilanti's beer stores together.



A new Pontiac at City Body's back door in 1939

What time will the commuter train stop?

Anyone who's ever taken on a project in historic preservation knows how dangerous it is to be asked, "When do you expect to be done with this?" It may be better to just observe and comment positively on the choice of colors or other amenities.

It must work that way with starting railroads, too. Early accounts of the coming commuter rail connecting Ann Arbor, Ypsilanti, Metro Airport, Dearborn, and Detroit indicated we could get on board in October. Now the report in *AnnArbor.com's* January 31 issue estimates it "could be running by the end of the year."

aa.com photo

Along with a color photo of Mayor Schreiber standing in front of the Freighthouse, the story also tells of Friends of the Freighthouse using grant funds to renovate "the *small* freighthouse west of the tracks." The five hundred people who danced in front of a 24-piece orchestera there not long ago assume *aa.com's* freelancer did not leave his desk to develop his story. It seemed to be what journalists call a "butt report." [*Didn't get off your butt to find facts.*]

Final news from *AA.com* indicates "Ypsilanti officials expect rail passengers will park in two lots—one south of Cross Street and west of the tracks and one between the tracks and River Street, north of the freighthouse." Looks like they are not planning to use the lot *next* to the Freighthouse, instead parking in the Sidetrack's private lot and in the "new" lot that nobody has used yet, just north of the depot, across the tracks, and across the right-of-way from the "small freighthouse."

9 April
The Train Stops Here
Freighthouse Benefit

6 p.m. @ the Michigan Firehouse Museum
$25 per person with hors d'oeuvres & cash bar
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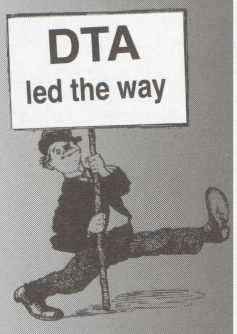
Some old ad cuts from the 1930s still fit today

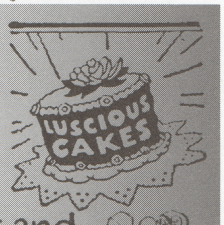
1976
Depot Town Association founded



1977
DTA incorporated
City adopts "Depot Town Plan"

1978
Tax-exempt status
City buys Freighthouse
Administers CDBG $ for new street and sidewalks

1979
1st Ypsilanti Yesteryear Heritage Festival
Farmers' Market opens



1980
DTA Caboose arrives

1981
1st Heritage Jazz Fest
Victorian Holiday

1982
Frog Island Jazz w/ WEMU
Boomer Days

1983
1st Winter Jazz Series
Neighborhood Watch

1984
Highway billboards
Cross Street Bridge replaced

1986
"Welcome" sign on Follett House
Signal Tower project
Depot sold to private owner

1988
Ypsi Opry falls flat
Victorian Bake-Off
DDA established
DTA merchants donate $20,000 for Freighthouse rehab

NORTH RIVER STREET

MacMullen Architect
Utilities Instrumentation Services
Realkidz Clothing
Depot Town CDC
Depot Town Sourdough Bakery
Ypsilanti Food Co-op
Ted's Auto Electric
What's left of the MCRR depot

EAST CROSS STREET

South Side

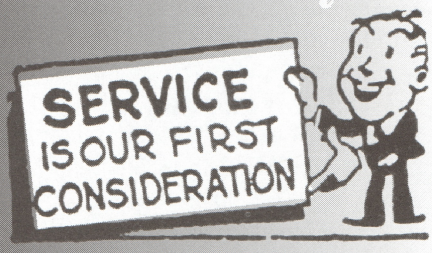
Standard Printing
Ypsilanti Automotive Heritage Museum
Sidetrack Bar & Grille
Frenchie's
Bird Brain
Clover Computers
The Hair Station
The Enchanted Florist
Energy Outlet
Café Luwak
Paula's Barbershop
Celebrations Banquet Hall
Queen of Hearts Pastries & Bakery, Inc.
Olde Towne Coin & Gold
Leave No Stone Mortgage Lending
Creation Station Hair Salon
City Body
Cafe Racer
Wolverine Law
Frog Island Marketing & Design
A3 Radio
Riverside Park

North Side

Michigan Firehouse Museum
John Pappas Sculpture Studio
Frog Island Park
Silver Spoon Antiques
Stealth Hydro
The Old Caboose, DTA headquarters
Depot Town Farmers' Market
The Freighthouse
Fantasy Attic Costumes
Nelson Amos Studio
Potts Studio Photography
Dennis' Music
James MacDonald &
Apple Annie's Antiques
Depot Town Tattoo Parlour
EMU-AAUP
Sticks Pool Parlor
Aubree's Saloon

OUTLYING SUPPORTERS

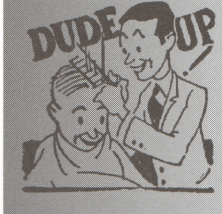
Ad Art Custom Graphics
Kimberly Rice, DDS
Ypsilanti Historical Museum & Archives
World of Rocks



1989
Bakers' Best published

1990
Ad Valorem tax approved for DDA
Cookie-of-the-Year Contest
The Great Train Race

1991
"Shadow" directory signs erected
Signal Tower completed
World's Shortest Santa's Parade
Final Winter Jazz Series



1993
Anheuser-Busch Clydesdales arrive
James Mann's "Depot Town Death Trip" series begins

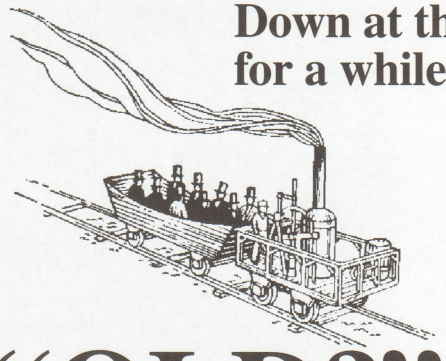
1994
All officers are owners

1999
1st ElvisFest
Town Clock installed in boulevard
"Down by the Depot in Ypsilanti" published

2008
Community Development Corporation established

2009
1st Ypsi Jamboree
DDAs merge
Thompson Block burned
(not a DTA project)

It's the same old same old all over again



Down at the depot, we were NEW for a while, but it just didn't last

When the first train came to Ypsi in 1838, it was the newest of the new. The district now known as Depot Town was the most modern thing there was. But, in just a little more than a century, the trains got old. In spite of the airplanes landing at Willow Run and the cars zooming past town on the Interstate highway, the trains just kept coming through and we got used to them. And we got old too, right along with the neighborhood.

"OLD?"

Use that word with a little more respect please!

With "new, new, new!" stamped on almost every commercial product on the shelves, who ever thought Depot Town could mount a successful marketing campaign by bragging about being old?

No one likes to be thought of as *old*, until you examine the attributes of those who we think of as *young*. By comparison, old doesn't look so bad. And it's so much more comfortable. Who has ever wished to be a teenager again? What a miserable condition that was!

But those who are *aged*—indicating a longer life span than *old* and usually referring to persons of very advanced years—are often proud of the fact that they have outlived most of their peers.

Children may exaggerate and refer to their parents as *ancient*, which means dating back to the remote past, often specifically to the time before the end of the Roman Empire, and their attitudes as *antediluvian*, which means literally dating back to the time before the Great Flood and Noah's Ark. Depot Town dates back to before some other floods—and it survived.

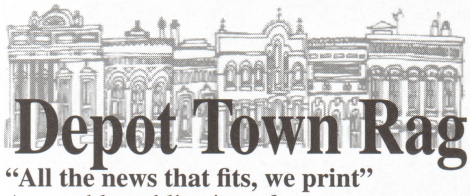
Some people seem older than they really are, simply because their ideas are *antiquated*, which means out of vogue or no longer practiced. This block has exploited antiquities rather successfully in its antique stores, vintage auto shows, celebratory festivals, and old jokes. What's old is more important to us than what's new.

Things rather than people are usually described as *archaic*, which means having the characteristics of an earlier, sometimes primitive, period. Look around at some of the strip malls and big box stores. This block's nineteenth century commercial and residential values have proven to work quite well in the 21st century.

Obsolete also refers to things, implying that they have gone out of use or need to be replaced by something newer. So it has been with asphalt and concrete pavement, electrical power supply, water and sewage systems, and the rest of the infrastructure down here. The actors have changed, but the stage set remains one of the prettiest and most authentic that can be found. We're still old fashioned.

In the next *Rag*:

You *auto* see the cars down here, plans for weekly Cruise Nights, vintage cars in Riverside Park....



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"All the news that fits, we print"
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the Depot Town Association, Inc.
The Old Caboose, 400 Market Place
Ypsilanti, Michigan 48198
To the editor:
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The Depot Town Association, Inc.

Gary McKeever, President
Michelle Shankwiler, Vice President
Ruth Ann Jamnick, Treasurer
Sandee French, Scy. & Past President
Website: www.depottown.org

DTA meets at 6:30 p.m on the third Wednesday of each month at Café Luwak, 42 East Cross Street.

Old news is good news

- Jeanne Calment, French, 122 years, 164 days (21 February 1875- 4 August 1997)
- Oldest currently living: Kama Chinen, F, Okinawa, Japan, b. 10 May 1895
- Oldest in Michigan: Daisey Bailey, b. 30 March 1896
- Oldest in Depot Town? Look around. He's sitting at the next table. Buy him a drink!

Keep piling up those annual celebrations. He/she with most birthdays wins!

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Time is on our side in Depot Town; all 139 years of it.

Planting and harvest times drastically altered here

Times have changed in Depot Town. There's no need to wait for the spring growing season now that Stealth Hydro has come to the neighborhood. Fall harvest time has also been stood on its head by the district's newest enterprise growing at 15 East Cross.

Home gardens are now offered a head start with the products on display in Hydro's well-stocked showrooms opening onto Cross and Rice Streets: hydroponic grow lights, metal halide grow lights. hydroponics systems, and liquid plant fill the showrooms where Salt City once displayed antiques.

"Bubbleponics™, is the art of delivering highly oxygenated nutrient solution directly to a plant's inner root zone," say managers Rick and Warren. "The days of merely misting the outer roots with nutrient spray are over. Gone too are the days of over/under watering, over/under feeding; the Stealth Hydro Bubbleponics™, system automatically maintains the ideal oxygen level of the nutrient solution so as to facilitate a healthy thriving root system."

The Dual Spectrum lighting system supports both vegetative growth and flowering phases. Hydro's new technologies have added extra lumens to the red spectrum to facilitate an emphasis on generous and vivacious flowering.

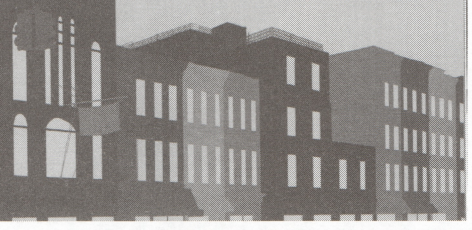
On your next tour of the district, drop in to the old Anderson & Deck auto shop to visit Stealth's Rick and Warren and be prepared to be amazed at the new technologies in planting, growing, and harvesting—without dirt.

And, right next door...

The science of hydroponics is also the current theme of Riga farmer John Getz at the Farmers' Market in the plaza next to the Freighthouse. Getz continues to offer his home-grown products during the traditional growing season, but has also become a leading expert on hydro-farming with MSU extension services.

How you gonna keep 'em down on the farm, when modern growers are talking about hydroponics via MySpace and YouTube?

A neighborhood where time stands still?



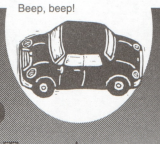
Not quite!

When told the reason for daylight saving time, the Old Indian said, "Only the government would believe that you could cut a foot off the top of a blanket, sew it to the bottom, and have a longer blanket."

Timely thoughts:

- "I didn't have time to finish the exam," complained the EMU student to his professor.
  "You had all the time there was," replied the prof.
- Time is but the stream I go fishing in. *-Henry David Thoreau*
- Living is entirely too time-consuming. *-Irene Peter*
- Time is a circus always packing up and moving away.
  -Ben Hecht
- Backward, turn backward, O Time, in your flight,
  And tell me just one thing I studied last night."
  -Hobart Brown
- Time flies like an arrow; fruit flies like a banana *-Monty Python*
- Time goes, you say? Ah no!
  Alas, time stays, we go. *-Austin Dobson*

A history of Daylight Saving Time



1784
Benjamin Franklin, minister to France, suggests "An Economical Project for Diminishing the Cost of Light"

1883
Time zones created to standardize railroad schedules

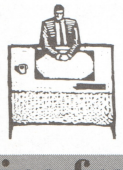
1907
Englishman, William Willett suggests Franklin's plan again, Brits put clocks one hour ahead of Greenwich Mean Time during summer months

1918
Congress federalizes US rail zones, starts DST to conserve resources for WWI effort

1945-1966
Individual states free to observe DST or not

1966
US Department of Transportation, creates *Uniform Time Act*

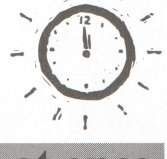
1986
President Reagan changes DST from last Sunday in April to first Sunday in April



1999
Depot Town Association installs a clock in the middle of East Cross Street

2005
President George W. Bush signs *Energy Policy Act* starting DST three weeks earlier (second Sunday in March) and a week later (to first Sunday in November). Act began in March

2010
We still seem to think we're changing the cosmos by changing our clocks



Time was man's invention to keep everything from happening all at once

Burned barracks up-date:

City Council has again extended time limits for traffic control around the Thompson Block which was destroyed by fire on 23 September 2009. Recent proposals by the developer hoped to see the scaffolding remain in place until November. Ideas proliferate re the realities of historic preservation. Some suggest others rebuild it, still others say it would make a dandy parking lot.

Why "old" works so well for us

"Preserved by poverty" is a slogan often seen around historic Charleston, South Carolina. Apparently those elegant neighbors are still feeling bad about starting (and losing) the Civil War, and now contend they could not afford to get modern and have just learned to live with the old stuff that remained. Rightfully proud of their historical qualities, that venerable city revels in being old fashioned.

So it is with antebellum Depot Town (there's a term we don't hear very much in the North). Even though we were on the other side of that unfortunate disagreement, we still make-do with our pre-Civil War attributes. Too bad about the old barracks that burned down last year, but we may see some *new* old developments there soon.

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RAGTIME
The season begins!

3 March
Kick-off event
for June 20th Relay For Life
6:30 p.m. YDL Whittaker Road

27 March
Comedy Jam 3
Michigan Firehouse Museum

9 April
The Train Stops Here
Freighthouse Benefit
6 p.m. @ the Michigan Firehouse Museum
$25 per person with hors d'oeuvres & cash bar
w/ Steve Gross, Auctioneer Extraordinaire!

2 May
31st Show & Shine
Car Show
to benefit SOS Community Services
Riverside Park

9-10 July
Michigan ElvisFest
Riverside Park

25-26 July
Michigan Brewers Guild
Summer Beer Festival
Riverside Park
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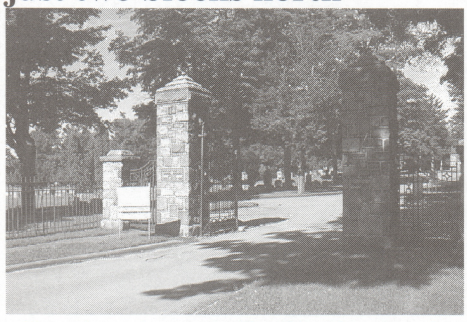
Some hope to beat time– just two blocks north



Time slows down considerably when we take that last ride up North River Street to the cemeteries where most of Depot Town's earliest pioneers are buried

Up north River Street to the cemeteries

Catholics are buried on the right side of North River Street; everybody else is across the street on the left.

"Stories about immortality are ancient; they are part of every religion. They riddle myths and legends and they always contain an argument with history because to live forever is to conquer time as much as it is to conquer death."

-Jill Lepore, *The Iceman (What the leader of the cryonics movement is really preserving), The New Yorker*, 25 January 2010

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In historic Depot Town
John & Pattie Harrington
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Ypsilanti Historical Society
Museum and Archives
(free admission)
Hours: 2:00 to 5:00pm
Tuesday thru Sunday
220 North Huron Street
Ypsilanti, MI 48197
www.ypsilantihistoricalsociety.org
Museum: 734-482-4990 *Archives: 734-217-8236*